

COPIES APPEARED
ON PAGE 1 (Part I)

LOS ANGELES TIMES
19 March 1986

Jobs in Tripoli Provide Incentive

Once Unwanted Libyans Get Wary Sudan Welcome

By CHARLES T. POWERS, *Times Staff Writer*

KHARTOUM, Sudan—Abdel Rahman, the tea vendor, is a shrewd businessman. Months ago he staked out a spot for himself under the shade of an old sycamore tree across the street from the Libyan Embassy.

Now he arrives at 6 a.m. to fire his charcoal brazier and heat his water kettle. He kicks off his sandals, squats on his straw mat and arranges the tea glasses on a dirty piece of oilcloth. He pulls a tangle of change and wadded bills from the pocket of his *djellaba* and waits for the first surge of business.

It comes even before the Libyans open the gates to their embassy, or People's Bureau, as the earliest of the day's visa applicants arrive to take up their vigil. Throughout the working day, the crowd seldom falls below 200—all men waiting for a stamp in their passports and a chance for a job in distant Tripoli. In the waiting, much tea is consumed.

Abdel Rahman, having driven off potential competitors with arm-waving indignation and threats of vague but certain retribution, quietly radiates the good cheer of the monopolist. He has the crowd to himself.

"Praise God," he says. "Business is good."

The scene of Abdel Rahman's good fortune is the most conspicuous manifestation of the new Libyan presence in Sudan. Abdel Rahman may be pleased, but others are not so certain.

Until last April, when Sudanese President Jaafar Numeiri was toppled in a military coup, the Libyans were *persona non grata* in Sudan, and Numeiri and the Libyan leader, Col. Moammar Kadafi, were sworn enemies who traded frequent insults and predictions of each other's imminent demise.

Now the Libyans are in Sudan in a big way, and are working hard to increase their influence and to win as many Sudanese friends as possible.

And it is estimated that at least 3,000—possibly as many as 7,000—Sudanese have gone to work in Libya in recent months. Many have gone to replace the thousands of Tunisian workers ex-

pelled by the Kadafi regime in the last year. The Sudanese have taken over jobs as cooks, house servants, hotel workers, truck drivers and laborers.

In addition, the Libyans are reported to have given jobs to scores of retired military officers and members of Sudan's state security organization, disbanded in the aftermath of the coup that brought down Numeiri.

Western governments, particularly the United States, find the

Libyan activities in Sudan worrying, and the Sudanese themselves appear to be wary of Libyan intentions in their country.

The Libyans, however, have agreed to a Sudanese government appeal for arms to fight off the insurgent Sudan People's Liberation Movement in the south of Sudan. There is some irony in the agreement, reached early this month by the Sudanese defense minister on a visit to Tripoli.

The Americans, who have been Sudan's military hardware supplier for the past decade, are likely to find the Libyan arms deal particularly irritating. U.S. military assistance to Sudan was \$46.5 million in 1984, by far the largest American military assistance effort in black Africa. Most of that assistance was designed as a defense against Libya.

The United States has long regarded Sudan as an important element in its Middle East policies, and a line of defense against perceived Kadafi mischief in Egypt and Africa. U.S. officials were particularly dismayed that the first official visitor to Khartoum within days of the coup, was Kadafi himself. The Libyan leader arrived, in full military regalia, with a jetliner full of aides, about 100 of whom stayed behind when he departed.

Some observers here say the Libyans, beginning with Kadafi, have been arrogant and heavy-handed in Sudan, an operating style that may have been a serious mistake with the generally courtly and low-key Sudanese.

Stream of Visitors

Since then, the Libyans have sent a steady stream of visitors to Sudan, some of whom, diplomatic sources say, have been connected by various Western intelligence agencies to European and Mideastern terrorist activities. The United States was so alarmed that it placed

Khartoum on the list of cities where Americans are warned against traveling. The official travel advisory remains in effect.

The Sudanese transitional government of Gen. Abdul-Rahman Suwar Dahab has since made an effort to keep track of Libyans entering the country and has reportedly asked several to leave. It is uncertain, however, whether the "undesirable" Libyan travelers have left or if they have slipped back into the country with different identity papers.

In addition to offering jobs to thousands of Sudanese who have had a hard time finding employment at home, the Libyans have taken hundreds of influential Sudanese on VIP tours to Libya, putting them up in luxury hotels and guest houses, to demonstrate the advantages of the Libyan "revolution."

In Khartoum, the Libyans have set up half a dozen Sudanese revolutionary committees, aimed at promoting Kadafi's "Green Book" teachings. The committees have attracted an estimated 2,000 members and are believed to have organized a few anti-American and anti-Egyptian demonstrations.

Sudanese political figures, who asked not to be named, said the Libyans also have approached some tribal leaders in outlying areas, plying some with money or promises of development projects, probably in the hope of drawing on their influence in the future, should the opportunity arise.

"It is necessary to get along with the Libyans," one political party official said. "We must be realistic. We share a long border with Libya, and we have no problem with the Libyan people. What we want is a neighborly and proper relationship with Libya."

The reference to a "proper" relationship is significant, for some Sudanese appear to believe that the Libyans have overstepped the bounds of propriety in Sudan. In one well-known intramural squabble, apparently over money, the members of a revolutionary committee kidnaped the Libyan leader of another committee in an episode involving gun-toting Libyans and midnight car chases all over Khartoum. The Sudanese, it was reliably reported, were appalled.

"To the Sudanese," an observer here said, "it was like having a bunch of juvenile delinquents move into the house."

Continued

As an important gesture of good will, the Libyans have supplied the Sudanese with about 2.2 million barrels of petroleum products. This has helped the Sudanese through the winter and will probably get the country through the elections scheduled for next month.

The Sudanese economy, based mainly on the export of cotton and the import of cash from Sudanese workers in Saudi Arabia and other states of the Persian Gulf region, remains in desperate shape, and the Libyan salting of cash around Khartoum has found ready recipients, even though it seems to have bought few Sudanese hearts and minds.

A Sudanese taxi driver, taking tea on a corner of Abdel Rahman's straw mat across from the Libyan Embassy, observed:

"Everyone here goes to Libya for the money. It is not for this Kadafi. This Kadafi, he is nothing. If your children come to you for food, and you reach in your pocket for money and there is nothing, what do you do? You do what you can. So maybe you go to Libya. What else can you do?"